

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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TAGS: PFOR, AO, TS

SUBJ: SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA

REF : STATE 38734

1. SUMMARY: IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S DEMARCHE RE SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA, FONMIN CHATTI GAVE RATHER GLOOMY ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTS. HE THINKS NETO FEELS HE NEEDS CUBAN AND SOVIET AID AGAINST SOUTH AFRICAN THREAT AND AS ASSURANCE AGAINST POSSIBLE RESURGENCE OF FNLA AND UNITA MOVEMENTS. HE BELIEVES IT WILL BE AT LEAST MONTHS BEFORE CUBAN/SOVIET FORCES WITHDRAW. WHILE GOT SHARES USG ASPIRATION FOR ANGOLAN NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND OUSTER OF FOREIGN TROOPS, GOT THINKS IT REALISTIC TO PREDICT ANGOLA WILL STAY IN EASTERN CAMP FOR CONSIDERABLE TIME. MAJOR FACTOR FOR NETO WILL BE HIS GREAT NEED FOR ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND FOREIGN EXPERTS TO FILL JOBS VACATED BY PORTUGUESE. CHATTI BELIEVES ZAIRE AND A ZAMBIA WILL COME TO TERMS WITH NETO, THEREBY FURTHER WEAKENING THE POTENTIAL OF FNLA AND UNITA. FONMIN SEES RECOGNITION OF NETO GOVERNMENT AS BEST WAY TO PROMOTE DESIRED RESULTS IN ANGOLA AT THIS JUNCTURE, BUT HAS NO ILLUSIONS THAT TUNISIA CAN EXPEDITE THOSE RESULTS. END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR MADE PRESENTATION TO FONMIN CHATTI FEB 19 OF POINTS STATED PARA 2 AND 3 REFTEL.

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3. CHATTI REPLIED AT LENGTH BEGINNING WITH LIST OF EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS AND CANADA WHICH HAVE NOW RECOGNIZED NETO GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA. HE SAID THAT DURING HIS TEN-DAY EUROPEAN TRIP EARLIER THIS MONTH HE HAD FOUND MANY LEADERS WHO SHARED HIS CONCLUSION, WHICH HE HAD REACHED IN EARLY JANUARY, THAT FNLA AND UNITA COULD NO LONGER EFFECTIVELY OPPOSE MPLA. GOT HAD REFLECTED DEEPLY ON SITUATION AND CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE USEFUL TO IGNORE THE MPLA, IN VIEW OF FACT THAT LIKE USG GOT HAS NOTHING AGAINST MPLA AS SUCH AND HAS NO RIGHT TO ASSERT WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT THE ANGOLANS SHOULD HAVE. SINCE NETO CONTROLS THE COUNTRY, GOT HAS NO RIGHT TO WITHHOLD RECOGNITION, CHATTI SAID.

4. WITH REGARD TO SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE, CHATTI THOUGHT IT WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE A QUICK AND EASY MATTER FOR NETO TO DISENGAGE FROM THEM. IT WOULD BE AT LEAST SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE THESE FOREIGN FORCES WITHDRAW SINCE NETO BELIEVES THERE IS STILL DANGER FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND THAT IF THE CUBANS LEAVE, THE FNLA AND UNITA MIGHT START AN INTERNAL CONFLICT WHICH NETO COULD NOT HANDLE. IN SHORT, CHATTI THOUGHT, NETO MAY CONTROL THE COUNTRY NOW BUT COULD HE CONTINUE TO DO SO WITHOUT THE CUBAN/SOVIET PRESENCE?

5. CHATTI SAID CIVIL WAR HAS RAVAGED ANGOLA AND DEPARTURE OF PORTUGUESE HAS EFFECTIVELY DESTROYED THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE COUNTRY. NETO HAS AN ENORMOUS TASK AHEAD IN GETTING THE COUNTRY GOING AND HE WILL CALL FOR LARGE AMOUNTS OF TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. CHATTI SAID HE BELIEVES YUGOSLAVIA IS ALREADY GETTING SET TO SEND A GOOD MANY EXPERTS AND THAT OTHER COUNTRIES WILL DO LIKEWISE. NETO IS AND ANGOLAN PATRIOT, THOUGH LEFTIST OF COURSE, SAID CHATTI, BUT THERE ARE EXIGENCIES WHICH OBLIGE HIM TO STAY IN THE EASTERN CAMP FOR A CONSIDERABLE TIME.

6. CHATTI DESCRIBED THE ANGOLAN SITUATION GENERALLY AS NO LONGER AS DANGEROUS AS IT HAD BEEN BUT STILL VERY DELICATE AND REQUIRING CLOSE ATTENTION. GOT HAS NOT YET HAD DIRECT CONTACT WITH MPLA GOVERNMENT BUT, AS STATED IN ITS DECLARATION OF RECOGNITION, TUNISIA HAS CALLED ON NETO

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GOVERNMENT TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. GOT AGREES WITH USG THAT ANGOLA MUST MORE AND MORE DISENGAGE FROM OUTSIDE POWERS BUT REALISTICALLY SEES THERE ARE MANY PROBLEMS THAT REMAIN. CHATTI CHARACTERIZED SENEGALESE PRESIDENT SENGHOR'S REFUSAL ON PRINCIPLE TO RECOGNIZE MPLA AS A MISTAKE. PRAGMATISM DICTATES RECOGNITION AND PATIENCE. ONLY BY TRYING TO WORK WITH NETO GOVERNMENT CAN WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVES, CHATTI SAID. GOT IS AWAITING

DEVELOPMENTS AND HOPES THAT FREE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD
BUT ACCEPTS THE FACT THAT WHAT HAPPENS IN ANGOLA DOES NOT
DEPEND ON TUNISIA.

7. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON CHATTI'S VIEW OF PROSPECTS
FOR SERIOUS FURTHER OPPOSITION FROM SUPPORTERS OF HOLDEN
ROBERTO AND SAVIMBI, FONMIN GRANTED THAT TRIBAL BASE OF
SUPPORT FOR FNLA AND UNITA STILL EXISTS. HE TENDS TO THINK,
HOWEVER, THAT A KEY ELEMENT IN THEIR STRENGTH HAS BEEN
SUPPORT PROVIDED BY NEIGHBORING STATES OF ZAIRE AND ZAMBIA.
CHATTI THINKS THESE TWO STATES MUST COME TO TERMW WITH
NETO FOR BASIC ECONOMIC REASONS. HE CITED EXAMPLE OF
MOZAMBIQUE, VERY MUCH A LEFTIST REGIME, BUT WHICH HAS
COMPLETE AGREEMENT FOR ECONOMIC PURPOSES WITH SOUTH AFRICA
WHICH IT OPPOSES POLITICALLY. ZAIRE HAS ALREADY SHOWN GOOD
FAITH TOWARD NETO BY BLOCKING PASSAGE OF ANTI-MPLA MER-
CENARIES THROUGH ZAIR. IN THIS CONNECTION, CHATTI REFLECTED,
PRESENCE OF MERCENARIES IN ANGOLA HAS NOT HELPED FNLA AND
UNITA BECAUSE IT HAS SERVED TO BLUNT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
REPROACHES ABOUT CUBAN INTERVENTION.
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